

huge but unknowable cost of preparing for and perhaps fighting a war with Iraq. The White House's tax-cutting yet free-spending ways defy history, and taxpayers will be the ones left responsible for decades to come.

That is just a part of what the Senator from Alabama said that I think requires a response. He said some are saying: Do nothing. That is really not what Senator DASCHLE has proposed nor what I have proposed. But I do believe it would be wise, on the brink of war, when there is no provision in this budget for the costs of that war—and none of us are suggesting—I want to make clear to my colleague, if I could have his attention, none of us are suggesting this administration or your party has any intention but to fund our men and women in uniform. I have no doubt of that. I want to make very clear, we make no suggestion, none, that there is any reluctance to back our men and women in uniform. That is not the point.

The point is this: When we are on the brink of war, and there has been no provision in the budget for the cost of that war, even though we know there are substantial costs associated with it, it seems unwise to some of us to increase spending, to have new spending initiatives—except for defense and homeland security—or to have new tax cuts, unless they are for a stimulus package.

That is the point we are making. And I think it is a wise one and a prudent one.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. CONRAD. I am happy to yield for a question.

Mr. SESSIONS. I understand that. I think the suggestion is our budget process has to stop until that occurs. And I think it is impossible for the President to give us a number now. I believe it does cause some confusion in our unity, which I would not favor.

But I want to ask the Senator this.

Mr. CONRAD. Let me just respond to that first.

Look, we are not suggesting the budget process stop. No. We are saying there ought to be a point of order, a 60-vote point of order against new spending initiatives, unless for defense or homeland security, or for new tax initiatives, other than for a stimulus package.

We are not suggesting the budget process stop. We are suggesting it proceed, but that it proceed with some restriction, some disincentive for new spending, other than for defense and homeland security, or for new tax initiatives, other than for a stimulus package.

Mr. SESSIONS. I know the Senator is committed to whatever figure we have to do to fund the effort of our fine men and women in uniform. I was looking at the Democratic proposed stimulus plan, and it is pretty anemic. I ask Senator CONRAD if he knew that not only was it basically limited, most of it in just 1, 2, or 3 years, but that in fact in 2004, as a result of eliminating the

depreciation provisions that are in existing law, it would amount to a \$16.7 billion tax increase on small businesses in 2004 and a \$14.8 billion increase in 2005?

Mr. CONRAD. Part of the plan that I have endorsed would include enhanced depreciation for small business.

Mr. SESSIONS. We passed it as part of a stimulus package before. The bill that has been put forward as the Democrat stimulus plan calls for the elimination of those which would amount to a tax increase over the current law of \$16.7 billion in 2004 and \$14.8 billion in 2005.

I ask the Senator if he believes this kind of very large increase in taxes on small businesses would be wise in a time of economic slowdown?

Mr. CONRAD. No. In fact, the plan I have endorsed would expand expensing for small business. I think that is a better course and would be a real stimulus. We should aggressively have a plan of small business expensing, expanding small business expensing in this year.

I see Senator ALLARD is in the Chamber. Is he seeking time?

Mr. ALLARD. I have a statement I would like to make when we get an opportunity during the debate.

Mr. CONRAD. We are under a time limit. There needs to be a granting of time in order for Senators to have an opportunity to speak. Senator NICKLES is not here at the moment. Perhaps he is on his way.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I yield the Senator from Colorado such time as he desires.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALEXANDER). The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I need time to get set up.

Mr. NICKLES. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period for morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE TEACHER TAX RELIEF ACT OF 2003

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today in support, once again, of America's teachers by joining with Senator COLLINS in introducing the Teacher Tax Relief Act of 2003.

Senator COLLINS and I have worked closely for some time now in support of legislation to provide our teachers with

tax relief in recognition of the many out-of-pocket expenses they incur as part of their profession. In the 107th Congress, we were successful in providing much needed tax relief for our Nation's teachers with passage of H.R. 3090, the Job Creation and Worker Assistance Act of 2002.

This legislation, which was signed into law by President Bush, included the Collins/Warner Teacher Tax Relief Act of 2001 provisions that provided a \$250 above-the-line deduction for educators who incur out-of-pocket expenses for supplies they bring into the classroom to better the education of their students. These important provisions will provide almost half a billion dollars worth of tax relief to teachers all across America over the next two years.

While these provisions will provide substantial relief to America's teachers, our work is not yet complete.

It is now estimated that the average teacher spends \$521 out of his or her own pocket each year on classroom materials—materials such as pens, pencils and books. First-year teachers spend even more, averaging \$701 a year on classroom expenses.

Why do they do this? Simply because school budgets are not adequate to meet the costs of education. Our teachers dip into their own pocket to better the education of America's youth.

Moreover, in addition to spending substantial money on classroom supplies, many teachers spend even more money out of their own pocket on professional development. Such expenses include tuition, fees, books, and supplies associated with courses that help our teachers become even better instructors.

The fact is that these out-of-pocket costs place lasting financial burdens on our teachers. This is one reason our teachers are leaving the profession. Little wonder that our country is in the midst of a teacher shortage.

Without a doubt, the Teacher Tax Relief Act of 2001 took a step forward in helping to alleviate the Nation's teaching shortage by providing a \$250 above-the-line deduction for classroom expenses.

However, it is clear that our teachers are spending much more than \$250 a year out of their own pocket to better the education of our children.

Accordingly, Senator COLLINS and I have joined together to take another step forward by introducing the Teacher Tax Relief Act of 2003.

This legislation will build upon current law in three ways. The legislation will:

No. 1, increase the above-the-line deduction for educators from \$250 allowed under current law to \$500;

No. 2, allow educators to include professional development costs within that \$500 deduction. Under current law, up to \$250 is deductible but only for classroom expenses; and

No. 3, make the Teacher Tax relief provisions in the law permanent. Current law sunsets the Collins/Warner provisions after 2 years.